

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO THE CRASH OF U-2 AIRCRAFT

SUMMARY: NEWS MEDIA REACTION TO THE CRASH OF THE
US U-2 AIRCRAFT HAS THUS FAR BEEN RELATIVELY RESTRAINED.
A DECLARATION BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS FURTHER
HELPED TO DOWNPLAY THE AFFAIR. THE MOST TROUBLESOME
ASPECT OF THE PRESS TREATMENT WAS THE ALLEGATION
THAT US MILITARY PERSONNEL CONFISCATED FILMS FROM
GERMAN CIVILIANS WHO WERE TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE
CRASHED AIRCRAFT.. END SUMMARY

1. MOST MAJOR GERMAN NEWSPAPERS CARRIED REPORTS IN
THEIR MAY 30 EDITIONS ABOUT THE CRASH OF THE AMERICAN
U-2 AIRCRAFT NORTH OF WIESBADEN. THESE REPORTS WERE
LARGELY BASED ON THE PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED BY U.S.
AUTHORITIES ON MAY 29 AND ON WIRE SERVICES STORIES
BASED ON GERMAN POLICE ACCOUNTS. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED,
HOWEVER, THESE NEWSPAPER STORIES ALSO RECOUNTED THE
HISTORY OF THE U-2, AND ITS REPUTATION AS A MYSTERY
SPY PLANE.

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2. THE REPORT IN THE GENERAL ANZEIGER (INDEPENDENT) WAS HEADLINED: "DID THE SPY PLANE COME OUT OF THE EAST?" THIS SAME ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT EYEWITNESSES REPORTED THAT THE MACHINE WAS COMING FROM AN EASTERLY DIRECTION WHEN IT CRASHED. THE GENERAL ANZEIGER STORY ALSO STATED: "DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY AMERICAN SOLDIERS BEGAN TO COLLECT FILMS CONTAINING SHOTS OF THE CRASHED MACHINE FROM NUMEROUS AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS." THIS PART OF THE ARTICLE WAS APPARENTLY BASED ON A DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR PRESS REPORT. SO WAS A SIMILAR REPORT APPEARING IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (INDEPENDENT) WHICH STATED: "AMERICAN SOLDIERS CONFISCATED FILMS CONTAINING SHOTS OF THE CRASHED MACHINE FROM NUMEROUS AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS."

3. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS CLAIMED THAT THE PLANE WAS FLYING FROM THE EAST WHEN IT CRASHED. THEY ALSO EMPHASIZED WHAT THEY CLAIMED WERE EXTRAORDINARY SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN AT THE CRASH SIGHT. THESE ALLEGEDLY INCLUDED HELICOPTERS FLYING OVER THE AREA AND THE FACT THAT GERMAN POLICE AIDED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS HAD SEALED OFF AN AREA FOUR KILOMETERS AROUND THE SCENE OF THE CRASH.

4. ON MAY 30, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN AND HIS DEFENSE MINISTRY COLLEAGUE ANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CRASH AT A REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING. THEY BOTH STATED THAT THE PLANE HAD FLOWN INTO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE ALLIES. THEY NOTED THAT THERE EXISTS A WELL-ESTABLISHED PROCEDURE FOR THESE KIND OF OVERFLIGHT RIGHTS AND THAT SUCH FLIGHTS ARE AN EVERY DAY OCCURRENCE. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT THE RECONNAISSANCE PLANE HAD BEEN FLYING AT A VERY HIGH ALTITUDE ON A MISSION TO TEST NEW NAVIGATIONAL INSTRUMENTS. IN THIS CONNECTION HE REFERRED TO THE STATEMENT BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

5. COMMENT: US MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAVE INVESTIGATED THE ALLEGED CONFISCATION OF FILMS BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND FOUND THE REPORTS TO BE DISTORTED. WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE HAPPENED IS THAT US MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THE CRASH SITE WANTED TO OBTAIN COPIES OF PHOTOS OF THE WRECKED AIRCRAFT FROM A GERMAN HUNTING PARTY WHICH HAD BEEN FIRST ON THE SCENE. THE US PERSONNEL HAD SUGGESTED TO THEIR GERMAN POLICE COLLEAGUES THAT THIS BE DONE. THE GERMAN POLICE THEN OFFERED TO DEVELOP THE FILM FOR THE HUNTING PARTY MEMBERS AT POLICE EXPENSE IN ORDER TO

OBTAIN PRINTS. THE FILM WAS THEN LOANED TO THE GERMAN
POLICE WHO WILL RETURN IT TO THE OWNERS.
HILLENBRAND

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